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ABSTRACT

The Community Laboratory in Political Science (CLIPS) is a unique combination of American government and exploratory work experience. Each semester 16 seniors from four high schools in Salinas work in community agencies and receive credit for both government and work experience. The major objective of the program is to provide students with personal experience with governmental agencies so they might develop a more positive attitude toward state and local government. To achieve this, the project organizer. Robert Bilek, asked each agency participating in the program to indicate the type of process they would like interns to experience. Initially, there was difficulty in getting agencies to participate in the program. After the first semester; however, agencies who had heard about the program began to call to volunteer their services. The participation of 25 agencies makes it possible for students to alternate between about 6 agencies in one semester. There are no grade requirements for the program, but students do need parental approval to participate and must furnish their ouw transportation Because students receive academic credit, Bilek must visit them on the job and talk with their supervisors. Students are also asked to keep anecdotal records of their experienes. which are taken into account when assigning grades. Bilek notes that the cost for the program is minimal; only his time is necessary to coordinate the program. (JLB)

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profiles of promise 8

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by
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PROFILES OF PROMISE are descriptive brochures that highlight innovative social studies and social education practices, which teachers and administrators can easily adapt to their own classrooms or schools.

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Community Laboratory in Political Science

The Community Laboratory in Political Science (CLIPS) is a unique combination of American government and exploratory work experience. Each semester, 16 seniors from four high schools in the Salinas Union High School District, Salinas, California, work in community agencies and receive credit for both government and work experience.

The course, now in its second year, is the brainchild of Robert Bilek, Curriculum Associate in Social Science for the district. Bilek believes that most instruction in local, state, and federal government uses what he calls a "formula" approach. Students are taught how governments should operate according to law and custom; however, there is little awareness of the actual operations of government. "Without some involvement in the governmental process, students tend to develop a sense of apathy in their role as citizens," notes Bilek. Besides direct interaction with governing process, Bilek wants the students to become familiar with inquiry techniques, expand their interpersonal relationships, and be more aware of their immediate environment.

Salinas has three types of work experience programs: general, vocational, and exploratory. The general and vocational programs are designed to employ students while in school; however, in the exploratory program, students go into various jobs just to look them over for possible career choices. Bilek has simply combined American government and exploratory work experience, and come up with CLIPS.

Students are required to have one full year in government for graduation in the Salinas District. Participation in CLIPS gives them one-half of this requirement, plus one-half year credit in work experience. Bilek recommends that students take their classroom requirement in government at the same time they are involved in the field experience, although this is not required.

ORGANIZING THE PROJECT

Because of the success of other exploratory work programs in the district, there was little oposition to CLIPS from the educational community. Problems, such as daily attendance credit and insurance coverage for students outside of the school grounds, were easily handled by phone calls to the proper people.

A more difficult obstacle was getting community agencies to participate in the program. Bilek had to find the right people to talk with in each agency. He found that personal visits with agencies were necessary to explain fully the program and the agencies' responsibilities. After the first semester, government and community agencies who had heard about the program but had not been involved began to call to volunteer their services.

Bilek notes that the cost for the program is minimal; only his time is necessary to coordinate the program. Students furnish their own transportation to their work stations, and agency personnel volunteer their time.

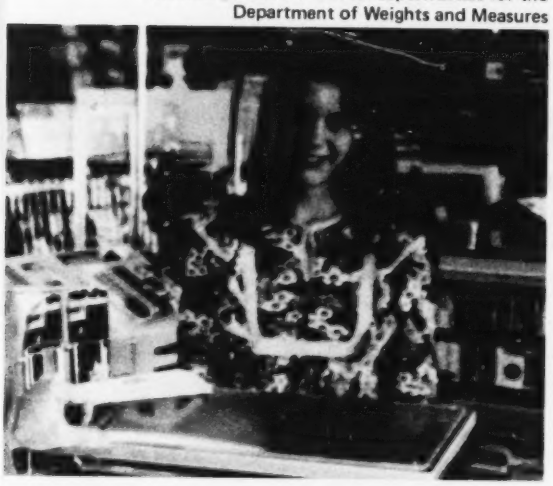
OBJECTIVES OF CLIPS

The major general objective of the CLIPS program is to provide students with personal experience with governmental agencies, so they might develop a more positive attitude toward state and local government. To achieve this general goal, Bilek asked each agency which agreed to participate in the program to indicate the type of process they would like interns to experience. Several examples of objectives submitted by the agencies are shown here:

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: During his stay here, a student will be exposed to the various programs and operations administered by the state employment service, including job placement, vocational counseling, manpower training, and special service programs for veterans, minor-

Constructing a block plan in the County Planning Department

Checking a scale in a local supermarket for the Department of Weights and Measures



Looking up information at the Salinas Chamber of Commerce

ities, and other applicant groups. As a result, he should obtain a better understanding of the services available through the local Human Resources Development office, as well as the problems encountered by job seekers in today's tight labor market.

COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT: The experience at the County Probation Department will afford the interns who are interested in the field of corrections an insight into adult and juvenile correctional processes on the county level from the time of arrest and court process until treatment is implemented and the case is terminated.

CITY OF SALINAS DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Through the program developed by the Department of Community Development, the intern will be exposed to the planning process of his community. He will see what problems arise and how solutions are developed and will work with the persons who make the decisions that shape the growth and development of the city.

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION: We will give the student an opportunity to become acquainted with the various phases of the Federal social security program and how it applies to members of the public. The student will also be exposed to the human element in applying for these benefits, as well as the sophisticated system we have of maintaining records and keeping such records up-to-date. The required confidentiality of records will have to be maintained during these procedures.

STUDENT SCHEDULING

Since CLIPS is an exploratory work experience, students do not spend the entire semester in one agency. Rather, they alternate so they can work in six agencies in one semester. The semester is divided into three 15-day and three 10-day periods. A typical schedule for a student during a semester is as follows:

Unemployment Insurance Office	15 days
County Health Department	10 days
City Public Works Department	15 days
City Fire Department	10 days
City Parks and Recreation Department	15 days
Social Security Office	10 days

The participation of twenty-five agencies makes such a schedule possible. No agency takes more than two students in a semester, and most agencies prefer one student at a time. Students and agencies can arrange the student's work hours in any way they wish. In many cases, students are spending almost double the actual time required, because they find the experience so interesting.

Two hours out of each week, the students select a civic meeting to attend on their own. This adds the dimension of seeing how citizen advisory boards or elected bodies operate in relation to the actual agency. A student working in the City Personnel Department, observing the operation of various hiring policies, attends City Council meetings and sees how such policies are formulated. If the student is working for an agency which does not conduct evening meetings, he is given a list of over twenty possible choices of other public meetings which he can attend.

AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM

Air Pollution Board
Boy Scouts of America
Chamber of Commerce
Department of Weights and Measures
City Department of Community Development
City Fire Department
City Parks and Recreation Department
City Personnel Department
City Public Library
City Public Works Department
County Clerk's Office
County Health Department
County Planning Department
County Probation Department
Human Resources Agency
Labor Law Enforcement Division
Salinas Union High School District
Social Security Administration
State Assemblyman's Office
Sunrise House (Counseling Agency)
Unemployment Insurance Office

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Finding interns for the program is easy. The program is now open to seniors only, although others are considered if space is available. There are no grade requirements for the program, but students do need parental approval to participate and must furnish their own transportation. If more students apply than can be accommodated, Bilek confers with the social studies department chairmen from the various schools for recommendations.

Since CLIPS is also a work program, students are expected to show good work habits. They are advised that they must report absences or lateness to their agencies as they would in a job. Bilek notes that students are often given more detailed work assignments when they show interest in the agency and have good attendance habits. Another requirement, which is new to many students, is the necessity to maintain confidential information. In some agencies, students must take an oath of secrecy with the consequence of a misdemeanor charge if the oath is violated.

TYPICAL EXPERIENCES

Examples of fairly typical agency experiences are given here to illustrate the variety of activities in which students are engaged. Officials of the Salinas Department of Parks and Recreation explain their various programs to the student when he first arrives. They then ask the student on which phase of the Parks and Recreation program he would like to focus while he is with them. One student decided she would like to know more about the city tree planting program. She went with the park service people who check the trees to decide where new trees are needed. She accompanied the planting crews to the lots where they get the seedlings, then spent time with the planting crews. She also worked with the tree trimming crew. She found the work so interesting that she has decided to pursue forestry in her career. In addition to the time she spent studying the tree planting program, she spent two evenings at the adult and teenage recreation programs as well as a Saturday at the city recreation program for young people. Both of these programs are also sponsored by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Another typical agency experience is at the Department of Weights and Measures. The students accompany the staff of the Department as they go around testing the various devices used by commercial establishments for weighing and measuring. One student had the opportunity to make purchases for the department to see if a store was using weighing devices correctly. He was overcharged for his purchase, so the Department had to investigate the store's equipment and practices.

A student working in the County Planning Department spent several days with county inspectors in zoning, auto abatement, and building. He said of this experience, "The time I spent out in the county had a great impact. I hadn't realized that there are people living in this county under such deplorable conditions. The poor are responsible for the largest number of zoning and other violations. They lack the knowledge and in most cases the money to do very much about it."

"The interaction with government agency employees places the student in a position demanding a degree of personal involvement," notes Bilek. "So far, the response from students indicates that this involvement has been deep and meaningful."

EVALUATION

Because students receive academic credit in government and in work experience, Bilek must visit them on the job and talk with their supervisors. Students are also asked to keep anecdotal records of their experiences, which are taken into account when assigning grades. The agencies are asked to evaluate the students in terms of punctuality, attendance, grooming, attitude, and willingness to participate in the program. This evaluation is somewhat limited, since the students spend a limited time in each agency.

Bilek feels that the most significant input in terms of total program evaluation consists of the anecdotal records of their experiences kept by the students. Students are asked about their experience with each agency: "What is the most significant thing you did while serving at this agency, and why was it significant?" In general, student records indicated that their most meaningful experiences were in those agencies where they became involved in the actual work of the agency. A typical response of this nature came from a student working with the Salinas Department of Community Development. "I was taken around to inspect buildings that were to be torn down. We toured houses and apartments built after the old buildings had been torn down. I was also involved in conferences with architects and planners and in a rehearsal for a council meeting. I really got a good idea of what the Department does." A second student noted, "The most significant experience to me with the Probation Department was the visit to Juvenile Hall. This was a real learning experience, as I had absolutely no knowledge about it previously. I learned a great deal from every visit."

In contrast, students felt their least significant experiences were those in which

Hearing about activities of the drug abuse center, Sunrise House

Working at the County Courthouse for the Planning Department

Spending time in a police patrol car as part of her experience with the Probation Department

they observed rather than participated, or those where they spent the majority of their time by themselves. One student commented, "My least significant experience was reading the City Charter. I could have done that on my own." Another noted, "My least significant experience was observing cases in Municipal Court. I sat in on some hearings, and I didn't know what was going on. This proved very boring."

It should be noted, however, that many of the students felt that the "least interesting" experiences were often still valuable in terms of learning. A student who spent time in the local assemblyman's office during the spring semester noted that election activity had not yet picked up. "Interns stationed there in the future will undoubtedly learn more than I did, because they'll be more involved. However, they will still have to dig into the paper work to learn something."

Bilek also asked the interns to evaluate the organization of the program in five areas. Students felt that a satisfactory or good job was being done in the areas of extending opportunities to help students understand local government and in interpersonal relationships between the students and personnel at the agencies. They indicated that more work was needed in introducing students to the program, in procedures to assign students to agencies, and in the amount of academic credit being given in relation to the amount of time students were being asked to give.

FUTURE PLANS

As vocational career programs are expanded in the Salinas Union High School District, Bilek hopes to expand the CLIPS program. He spends a great deal of time getting additional agencies to participate in the program. His ultimate hope is to have several agencies available for each of the four Salinas high schools, so each school can assume responsibility for its own CLIPS program. Bilek notes that district funding is necessary for the personnel to organize the program on this basis, and such funds are not currently avaiable. However, CLIPS has proven very successful in the Salinas schools, and will continue, as a new way for students to become involved in the process of state and local government.

Students working with the Public Health Department often serve in one of the public clinics

One of the activities of the City Personnel Office is its communication service

Students who spend time in the Sheriff's Office work in the crime lab

At the City Library, students help patrons with a variety of problems and questions

For more information concerning the subject of this paper, WRITE:

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Salinas, California 93901

Visits to the project can be arranged with Mr. Bilek. He can also answer detailed questions about CLIPS.

WRITE:

Social Science Education Consortium, Inc.
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302

for:

Newsletter #14. Lead article by Judith A. Gillespie, "Instructional Uses of School Political Experiences," details the use of the school as a political laboratory.

Turner, Mary Jane. **Materials for Civics, Government, and Problems of Democracy: Political Science in the New Social Studies.** Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1971. 199 pp. An analysis of the political science content of 49 curriculum packages.

READ:

Feder, Bernard. **The Process of American Government: Cases and Problems.** New York: Noble & Noble, 1972.

Mehlinger, Howard and John Patrick. **American Political Behavior.** Lexington, Mass.: Ginn and Company, 1972.

The above books are textbooks which take an entirely new approach to the teaching of political science and government in high school.

Social Education. National Council for the Social Studies, October, 1972. The entire issue is devoted to teaching about American government.

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 055 017 – Project Canada: Western Canadian Urban Dynamics: A Model for Student Involvement in the Urban Setting - MF $.65, HC $3.29

ED 055 710 – Youth Action and Youth Resources in Appalachia: A Report from the Youth Development Leadership Program of the Appalachian Regional Commission - MF $.65, HC $3.29

ED 056 927 – Learning About Politics in American High Schools: A Progress Report on a National Survey - MF $.65, HC $3.29

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